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CAPITAL REPORT

RFE Goal
Is Vague

By FULTON LEWIS, JR.

NEW YORK, Feb. 26.—I have been privileged, at long last, to sit down in conference with the president of the Free Europe Committee, Lieut. Gen. Willis D. Gutterberger, retired, and several of his more experienced advisors from the Free Europe board of directors and the Crusade for Freedom.

It was a continuous 4-hour and 20-minute session during which the gentlemen were very cordial and solicitous, although I am frankly dubious as to what was accomplished, if anything.

I still have no satisfactory understanding of the purpose and objectives of the Free Europe project, beyond the stated capsulism by one of the directors that "we just want the people of the captive nations to know that we are here and thinking of them."

They seemed to be in shock, still, from the charges made against them at the time of the Hungarian revolution, that they incited the revolution through their broadcasts and balloon leaflets and then failed to come to the assistance of the freedom fighters.

They were most vehement in their denial of these charges despite the fact that this has never been an issue between us. I have never referred to those charges or given them circulation, either in the printed or spoken word.

ON THE SUBJECT of Fletcher Bartholomew, the Free Europe meteorologist who was spirited back to the United States strapped to a stretcher as a mental case, after he had turned in a report that was critical of one of his superiors, I was provided with the following as the official, considered analysis of Free Europe:

"On July 27, 1956, the American Consul General (in Munich) after discussion with Mr. Bartholomew and after the request of Free Europe Committee, recommended to the appropriate military authorities that Mr. Bartholomew be given a medical examination. This was arranged through a United States Army Catholic chaplain known to Mr. Bartholomew.

"Competent Army medical authorities diagnosed an illness which in their opinion required evacuation of Mr. Bartholomew to the United States. This was done in the interests of Mr. Bartholomew himself, the United States Government and Free Europe Committee."

The fact that Mr. Bartholomew was incarcerated illegally, against his will and the protests of his friends and without the knowledge of his wife, seems unimportant. No mention is made of it.

BUT THIS is incidental. What troubles me is the lack of any real pattern or plan of propaganda. I wanted to know, propaganda for what? Freedom? The possible interpretations of that word, in the Free Europe lexicon, are broad enough to cover almost anything in actual operational broadcasting.

I was hoping for some specifics. Without them, even the broadcasters themselves have no knowledge of what they're trying to do.

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